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Mr. SHUTE's

SERMON

AT THE

INTERMENT

OF THE

Rev. Dr. GAY.

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A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT THE MEETING-HOUSE

IN THE

FIRST PARISH IN *HINGHAM*, MARCH 23, 1787,

AT THE

INTERMENT

OF THE

REV. *EBENEZER GAY*, D.D.
PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN HINGHAM,

WHO DIED MARCH 18, 1787.

BY *DANIEL SHUTE*, A.M.
PASTOR OF THE SECOND CHURCH IN HINGHAM.

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A

SERMON, &c.

NUMBERS xxiii, 10.

LET ME DIE THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS, AND LET MY LAST END BE LIKE HIS

WHETHER Balaam, in time paſt, had been a great prophet, and employed by the God of heaven, in delivering his meſſages to the people, among whom he lived, or not, is of no great conſequence to determine: if he had been—it is evident that he became vain and avaricious; forſook his God, and betook himſelf to magic arts;—the predominant diſpoſition of his heart he diſcovers, in his fondneſs to accept the lucrative offers made him, by Balak, king of Moab, to come and curſe the children of Iſrael, who were then encamped in his neighbourhood. The frequent, though fruitleſs, attempts, which he made to this purpoſe, indicate the latent hope he had in his breaſt, that he might, at length, be freed from the divine reſtraints, which

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he was under, and be permitted to anſwer the deſign of Balak, at leaſt, ſo far as to ſecure to himſelf the *wages of unrighteouſneſs*. But in all his attempts he was baffled by a ſuperiour influence, and conſtrained to utter great bleſſings, and to predict happy events, inſtead of curſes, to the people of God.

BALAAM appears to have had the knowledge of the true God, and juſt ſentiments of his moral government, though they did not ſavingly affect his heart, and influence his life:—when he viewed, from the high places of Baal, the encampment of Iſrael, the deſcendants of the holy patriarch, and the peculiar people of God, entitled to his ſpecial favour, he ſeems, for a moment, to be looſed from his attachment to this world, and, in rapture, expreſſes the conviction and wiſh of his own heart; *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.*

THE teſtimony hereby given to the reality and importance of religion, by a perſon of his character, deſerves our notice, as it ſhews the folly and wretched inconſiſtency of thoſe who go on in a courſe of ſin;—their progreſs herein is in oppoſition to the honeſt convictions of their own minds, and to their ardent wiſhes, in their ſober hours. The moſt ſerious hour of all, the cloſe of life, will ſhew their folly in the moſt affecting light; *when*, after a long and obſtinate diſregard to religion, they will in vain wiſh for its ſupports, and, from a conviction

viction of its great utility, will exclaim with our prophet; *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.*

But leaving this remark to your own private meditations, I ſhall endeavour, from the words, to exhibit the character of the righteous man—ſhew that he is mortal as well as other men—and then point out ſome circumſtances attending the death of the righteous, that make it happy and deſirable. And

I. As to the character of the righteous man. This title is not to be reſtricted alone to the faithful diſcharge of one eminent branch of the duty required of man, the doing juſtice, or living righteouſly; but is commonly uſed, in the ſcriptures, as comprehending the whole of the religious character. It implies in it, the knowledge and belief of thoſe things that are required to be known, and believed by us; and a practice correſponding to this knowledge and belief. The hopes of the righteous, for the acceptance of his perſon and imperfect ſervices *here*, and for great and unmerited rewards *hereafter*, are founded upon the gracious plan of the goſpel; he therefore lives in the exerciſe of *repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, and in the obſervation of whatſoever he hath commanded: with Zechariah and Elizabeth of old, who were *both righteous before God*, he is found *walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameleſs.*

IT is an eſſential part of *his* character, to love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himſelf; it is therefore his ſincere and conſtant care *to keep a conſcience void of offence towards God and towards men*; and, amidſt all the imperfections incident to humanity, he uprightly endeavours, in his general courſe, to be *blameleſs and harmleſs as a child of God, without rebuke, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation.*

THE duties of the particular ſtation aſſigned *him* by heaven *he* diſcharges with fidelity; *not ſlothful in buſineſs, but fervent in ſpirit* in *ſerving the Lord*, he is willing *to ſpend* and *be ſpent* in ſedulous exertions to promote the honour of God, and the happineſs of mankind.

NOR is the righteous weary in *well doing*; but with patience endures every trial, and with fortitude encounters every oppoſition, and perſeveres in the good ways of the Lord. In a ſenſe of his own weakneſs, he keeps up a lively truſt in the divine power and goodneſs:—when the powers of his mind are, in ſome degree, impaired by the debility of advanced years, and the very nerves of his ſoul are relaxed, he ſtill keeps the poſt aſſigned him, and, like Gideon and his men of old, though *faint*, yet purſueth: when his *hands hang down*, and his *knees* become *feeble*, *he* ſtill reſolves to go on in the way of appointed duty in the ſtrength of the Lord, and continues to ſerve God faithfully, and his generation according to his will, to the cloſe of life.

II. IT is ſuppoſed in the text that the righteous

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is mortal, and muſt die, as well as other men. This character, however great and good, is no exemption from the grave; for the empire of death extends over all the human race: There is not a ſon or daughter of Adam but is doomed to fall by its unrelenting hand. In the preſent conſtitution of things, *it is appointed unto men once to die*: One generation goeth off the ſtage for another to come on; and there is a conſtant ſucceſſion of the human ſpecies to the grave, *the houſe appointed for all the living*. Righteouſneſs is no ſecurity from the conqueſt of this victorious enemy. *There is no man that hath power over the ſpirit to retain it, neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is no diſcharge in that war.*

THERE is indeed no order in the grave, or in the paſſage to it. Men die at every age: for whenever it pleaſeth the Supreme Arbiter of life and death, duſt returns to duſt, and aſhes to aſhes: All, after they have enjoyed life, and acted upon the preſent ſtage the *term* appointed by heaven, however different their moral characters, ſhare one common fate. In this reſpect, *as it happeneth to the fool, ſo it happeneth* to the wiſe man. The moſt uſeful life—a life guided by the dictates of reaſon and religion—ſpent in promoting the cauſe of God, and the welfare of mankind, however for a while protracted, will have its period: The prieſts, under the Jewiſh economy, *were not ſuffered to continue by reaſon of death*; and in the eſtabliſhed courſe of things, *the godly man ceaſeth,*

and the faithful fail from among the children of men —There is, in this ſtate of mortality, conſtant exerciſe for the mournful paſſions; for, as the wiſe man obſerves, *becauſe man goeth to his long home, the mourners go about the ſtreets.*

BUT though the death of the righteous is *certain*, and may be deeply lamented by ſurvivors, becauſe of the injury done to their affections, and the loſs they ſuſtain thereby, yet it is not in reality ſo gloomy a ſcene, and ſo much to be deplored on their *own* account:—They find ſupport under an event to which nature is averſe, and are made to triumph over the enemy, which they had long feared; and we have not ſo much reaſon to weep for them, as we have to weep for ourſelves.

THIS leads me, as propoſed, in the third place,

III. To point out ſome circumſtances attending the death of the righteous, that make his laſt end happy and deſirable.

IT was a view in his own mind, of the circumſtances that uſually attend the death of the righteous, and are always conſequent upon it, as more happy and deſirable than thoſe of the wicked, that drew from Balaam's mouth this paſſionate exclamation; *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.*

A PARTICULAR attention to the condition of the

the *righteous* and *wicked* at death, relative to this *world* and *another*, would ſhew it to be eſſentially different; and that the condition of the former has greatly the advantage of the latter. It is not, however, in this exact comparative view, that we deſign to conſider the death of the righteous; but briefly to point out ſome things that make his death *happy*, and may excite the *wiſh* of every attentive mind, that ſimilar circumſtances may attend his own.

THE righteous is to be conſidered as having the feelings and infirmities of a mortal man; but, if his religion will ſupport him under them, and by preſent enjoyment and future proſpects render him ſuperiour to them, eſpecially in the critical moment of death, it will place him in an exalted and amiable attitude.

IT is not pretended, that the principle of ſelf-preſervation, implanted in human nature, does not operate as ſtrongly in *him* as in other men. *He* has the ſame natural averſion to death, and conſiders himſelf as under higher obligations to uſe the means for the preſervation of his life, than the wretched tribe of infidel libertines, who profeſſedly rank themſelves with the inferiour order of creation, and expect, like their fellow brutes, to periſh forever at death. His mind is inſpired with nobler ſentiments and with ſublimer views, and is almoſt equally poiſed between a deſire to live and a wiſh to die: He is willing to *wait, all the days*

days of his appointed time, till his change ſhall come; and in the mean time, is ready to act up to every moral obligation.

His religion does not produce in him a ſtoical inſenſibility, but, under the various evils of life, he has the feelings common to human nature. Pain and diſeaſe, and all the diſtreſſing attendants of old age, are to him what they are to other men—they are ſenſibly felt: But in a *moral* view there is a difference; they are borne with a better temper, with patience and reſignation,—they are part of his trial; and being thus ſuſtained, they *yield* to him *the peaceable fruit of righteouſneſs*, and work out for him *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*.

In the laſt and moſt trying ſeaſon that awaits him, the righteous man will naturally feel a love for life, and a reluctance to death. Death is the king of terrours—the greateſt of natural evils; its approaches are, therefore, the moſt alarming to human nature. There is a moſt intimate connexion between the ſoul and body; they ſome how inſtantly participate of each other's pains and pleaſures: the friendſhip ſubſiſting between them is intimate and great, like the friendſhip between David and Jonathan: a fondneſs for the continuance of this union is, therefore, *natural*, and not to be cenſured:—Every attempt, by the various diſeaſes incident to mankind, to pull down this earthly tabernacle, will, of conſequence, awaken our apprehenſions—

henſions—theſe harbingers of death will rouſe our fears: And, ſeparate from all moral and religious conſideration, the righteous man is ever ſubject to the *natural* fear of death: But it is his happineſs, that religion fortifies his mind againſt it,—ſupports him under it, and inſpires him with a hope and confidence ſuperiour to it: From hence ariſes that internal peace, and intrepidity of ſoul, with which *he* meets the pale conqueror; and that patience and reſignation, with which he bears the diſtreſſing aſſaults of ſickneſs, pain and agony, thoſe heralds that proclaim his approach.

THE ſeparation from worldly connexions and worldly things, made by death, is viewed by mankind with regret, and adds to their diſtreſs upon its approach. The thought, in ſome degree, affects the heart of the pious and good. We are here ſurrounded with many bleſſings adapted to give us a rational pleaſure: we may, and ought to, prize them in their place; but it is our miſtake, to eſtimate them at too high a rate, and place our happineſs in them. This paſſion, notwithſtanding, is generally predominant in the hearts of the children of men, and makes them dread death as the privation of their *chief good*.

BUT the righteous is better directed in his purſuits after happineſs. He is *not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of his mind*. The affections of his ſoul are diſengaged from an undue attachment to any thing below his God, of whom

whom he has made choice, as his portion: he is not, therefore, without preſent ſupport, and the moſt animating future proſpects to balance the want of preſent enjoyments. The objects of his tender affections, and who ſeem to require his patronage and help, he can leave with God, in firm confidence that he will be their *father* and *friend*:—and as he has long ſince inſcribed vanity upon all things here below, and ſedulouſly endeavoured to ſecure a better country, he finds himſelf prevailingly willing to relinquiſh every earthly emolument, for *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven for him.*

A CONSCIOUSNESS of ſin unrepented of, and unforgiven, and the apprehenſion of the juſt and deſerved conſequences of it, in another world, gives the keeneſt edge to diſtreſs, on the approach of diſſolution. The forerunners and attendants of death, that have been mentioned, may be ſuſtained by the daring ſpirit of ſome, or from a ſtupor in others that benumbs their ſenſes: But when the conſcience of the ſinner is awakened, and his ſins ſtare him in the face, and he realizes to himſelf what St. John had in viſion, death on his pale horſe, and hell following, his fortitude fails, horrour ſeizes him, and he is unable to bear it:—When he is ſoon to be removed from every thing dear to him *here*, and has no proſpect *hereafter*, but *of a fiery indignation to devour* him, the ſcene is inexpreſſibly terrible; every reflection upon his paſt life confirms and increaſes the horrour and deſpair of his ſoul; and

and he agonizes in the certain expectation of being *puniſhed with an everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

FROM theſe diſtreſſing apprehenſions, and from this oppreſſive deſpair, at the cloſe of life, the righteous is happily removed. It is not aſſerted, that every good man, at *once*, thinks himſelf ſure of heaven; this I believe to be contrary to the experience of *the generation of God's children:* But yet every *good man is ſatisfied from himſelf*—has a certain ſelf-complacency ariſing from the goodneſs of his heart, and his upright endeavours to live to God. The imperfections that attend him, after all his pious and virtuous exertions, may frequently raiſe doubts in his mind of the goodneſs of his ſtate. Upon reflection, he knows that he is not ſo good as he ought to be, or as he might be. This reflection produces contrition, and gives new vigour to his endeavours;—greater circumſpection and exertions remove his doubts, and produce greater ſatisfaction to his mind. His progreſs in religion, whereby he keeps up intercourſe with heaven, carries a preſent reward with it;—inſpires him with reſignation to the will of God—with hope in his mercy, and is productive of a ſacred ſerenity and compoſure of mind; for, *the work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs, quietneſs and aſſurance for ever.*

A *good hope through grace* is the effect of his religion; and a good hope not only ſupports under the

the previous train of evils, but alſo diſarms death of its biggeſt terrours. A review of his paſt prevailing temper and conduct, upon his laſt bed, affords the righteous a ſecret pleaſure ;—the habitual ſubmiſſion and reſignation of his heart, called in to exerciſe at this trying ſeaſon, yield an additional ſatisfaction, better felt than expreſſed : and being at the ſame time *ſtrengthened with might from on high in the inner man*, the reſult of the never failing goodneſs of God to thoſe whoſe ways pleaſe him, he riſes ſuperiour both to the *natural* and *moral* fear of death. He ſuſtains the laſt conflict with great compoſure ; and finding his faith—his hope—his courage increaſes, in triumphant rapture he cries out ; *O death where is thy ſting ? O grave where is thy victory ? Thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through Jeſus Chriſt.*

THIS view of the righteous, as delivered from, or ſupported under, the evils and diſtreſſes that uſually attend mortality, and which are ſo much the dread of mankind, muſt place him, at this critical juncture, in a deſirable ſituation : And, if we conſider ourſelves as involved in the ſame common fate, draw from our minds the pathetick wiſh ; *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.*

BUT in addition to what has already been obſerved concerning the *laſt end* of the righteous, a farther and more particular attention to his ſituation, at the cloſe of life, in his connexions with this world

world and the future, will heighten our ideas of the happineſs that attends this character, and ſhew it more fully to be an object deſerving our higheſt eſteem and moſt ardent wiſhes.

THE conſciouſneſs of having ſuſtained a character, eſpecially through a long courſe, that will meet the approbation and applauſe of ſurvivors, affords to him agreeable and ſupporting reflections, in the gradual and near approach of the laſt gloomy ſcene of life, when, in the conſtitution of things, his days muſt have a period.

THE malevolence of wicked men may indeed, in ſome degree, eclipſe the luſtre of his character in this life, and purſue him, like the adverſary of ſouls, to the very gates of death: But the envy and malice, which denied him deſerved applauſe while living, are commonly buried with him in the duſt. *His* good qualities, when they no longer caſt *their own* into ſhade, are confeſſed by his *enemies*; and the ſecret veneration which *they* had for his virtues, diſcovers itſelf, by their viewing him now in a different light.

THE pious and good eſteemed him, when living, as one of the *excellent* in the earth; and follow him, in their affections, after he is dead: Eſpecially do *they*, who have been edified by his inſtructions and example, think of him, with the deepeſt reſpect, as their ſpiritual guide and father: To them his memory is bleſſed.

IN ſpite of prejudice and envy, the character of the righteous obtains the general approbation, and will do ſo, as long as mankind retain in their breaſts a diſtinction between right and wrong, good and evil.

A GOOD name is no ſmall ingredient in the happineſs of man: It preſuppoſes rectitude of conduct, or right action, from which it reſults; and right action is the dignity of human nature: And acting up to the dignity of our nature, which conſtitutes the religious character, is naturally productive of ſelf-complacency.

THE approbation of *others* is an additional evidence of the rectitude of our conduct; and in proportion to the evidence the righteous man has of *this*, is his ſelf-complacency and happineſs increaſed. In this view, the deſire of fame, ſo deeply implanted in the human breaſt, is laudable; and when obtained will afford ſolace in the expiring hour.

A CHARACTER honorary to God, and uſeful to mankind, the righteous reflects upon with pleaſure, in the laſt ſtage of life, and flatters himſelf that it may be laſting in its ſalutary influence upon others. It affords him a pleaſing ſatisfaction to think not only of having done *good* in his life, but alſo of being inſtrumental of doing *good* after death; that by the example which he hath left ſurvivors, he ſhall ſtill promote the cauſe of God, the intereſt of religion, and happineſs of mankind.

A CHARACTER obtained by ſtudiouſly following the dictates of religion, is not only grateful to the *righteous himſelf*, but alſo places him in a dignified point of light, in the opinion of *others*, as having ſtudied the true perfection of his nature, and purſued a courſe that tends to complete it. Such a courſe the ſcriptures repreſent as leaving a deep and laſting impreſſion; *The righteous ſhall be in everlaſting remembrance.* And alſo as eſtimable in itſelf: *A good name is better than precious ointment.* If by this ointment is intended the compoſition uſed in thoſe times, to prevent the dead body from putridity and offenſiveneſs, *a good name is better*; as it ariſes from that rectitude of conduct, which raiſes the poſſeſſor of it from the debaſement of ſin, and tends to immortalize his fame.

AGAIN. To reflect that *his* general deportment, in the world, has been adapted to ſecure the affections of his friends, and to lay the beſt foundation for their ſupport and comfort, when he ſhall leave them, affords to the righteous a pleaſing ſatisfaction, in the evening of his days.

THE kind offices of our neareſt relatives, and of thoſe, whoſe virtuous qualities, and ſimilarity of ſentiments and manners, have engaged a mutual friendſhip, contribute much to our happineſs in our journey through life:—They alleviate our ſorrows, and increaſe our joys, and are peculiarly welcome in the time of extremity. The method

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to ſecure their kind regards is pointed out by the wiſe man: *He that hath friends muſt ſhew himſelf friendly.* The ſettled and governing principles of the righteous man tend, in their own nature, to a compliance with this direction. The benevolence of his heart, expreſſed in an uninterrupted ſeries of beneficent actions towards his near relatives and intimate friends, will meet with its deſerved reward, in the kind returns of friendſhip from others, and from them at particular ſeaſons, when he ſhall ſtand moſt in need of them.

THE readineſs of his friends in adminiſtering to his relief, in the approaching hour of diſſolution, produces in him an agreeable emotion of ſoul, and returns of gratitude and love. Their buſy and affectionate attempts to render the evening of life comfortable to him,—to ſoften his pillow, and make his ſick and dying bed eaſy, by every poſſible method;—and the falling ſympathetick tear, are all obſerved by him with a ſecret pleaſure. In the momentary expectation of parting, the joy of his heart is increaſed, and the mournful ſcene brightens up, from the pleaſing hope that the ſeparation, ſoon to take place between them, will not be perpetual; but that in ſome future period, and that not far diſtant, they ſhall meet again, in the regions of amity and bliſs, where they ſhall cultivate the ſocial affections without interruption, and be undivided in friendſhip forever.

IT is yet to be obſerved, that as the cruel ſepa-

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ration of friends by death, cannot take place without producing the tendereſt feelings in the human breaſt ; it gives the good man a real ſatisfaction to reflect, that what he is *by the grace of God* affords ſupport and comfort to his friends, as well as to himſelf. The ſcene is trying, and puts the mind in queſt of ſupport : To ſee him in the pangs and ſtruggles of nature, that are entailed upon the human race, in this frail and mortal ſtate—to know that his eyes are ſoon to be cloſed on the world, and on them,—and that, in a little time, they ſhall *ſee his face no more*, are things hard to fleſh and blood, and painful to the heart of his friends : But a review of his paſt life, in connexion with the reſigned temper with which he now meets his fate, obſtructs the tide of grief, and reconciles them to the parting ſtroke. The thought, upon good foundation, that he will be happy in the ſucceeding ſtate of exiſtence, tends, more than any thing, to aſſuage the tumult of their paſſions, and to compoſe their minds to calm ſubmiſſion, in the departure of their amiable and beloved friend. While they ſee him with hopes full of immortality, and willing to be gone ; and are firmly perſuaded, that, after a life ſpent in promoting the honour of God, and the good of mankind, in the faithful diſcharge of the duties of his ſtation, he is going to receive the rewards of a *faithful ſervant*, they ſuppreſs the wiſh that he may be detained here any longer, on their account, and cordially acquieſce in the ſeparation for a while, as their loſs will be his unſpeakable gain.

FINALLY,

FINALLY. The righteous is happy at the hour of approaching diſſolution, in the certain proſpect of the approbation and friendſhip of his Maker and Judge, in the future ſtate of exiſtence, into which death will introduce him.

BALAAM evidently admits the ſuppoſition of the righteous man being the favourite of heaven; and of a future ſtate of exiſtence, in which this favourite ſhall receive an ample reward for all his paſt ſervices: Otherwiſe, how could he conceive of there being ſo much greater advantage in his death, than in the death of the wicked, as paſſionately to deſire it? For if the end of their life *here* were the period of their exiſtence, there would be ſo near a ſimilarity in their death, that neither could be the object of preference; but an eſſential difference between them is taken for granted by him, and is the foundation of his wiſh. His ſentiment, in this point, is ſupported by revelation—is confirmed by the goſpel, which has brought life and immortality to light, as it has thrown greater light upon the doctrine, and announces the dead bleſſed, *who die in the Lord.*

THE righteous man *only* has ground to hope for a happy immortality; and to him the ſtrongeſt aſſurance is given that he ſhall obtain it, if he continues to ſupport his character, and *follows on to know the Lord.* He is the object of the divine complacency and love; for *the righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs, and his countenance doth behold*

the upright. The love of God towards him will be conſtant and everlaſting; and by his unfailing promiſe, he will never leave nor forſake him.

WHEN, therefore, we are ſpectators of the gradual and increaſing decline of his tottering frame, by advanced age; or of the violent aſſaults of diſeaſe and pain, with unremitted efforts undermining his conſtitution; and when we ſee him, unable to ſuſtain the ſhock any longer, agonizing and expiring in death, we muſt not view him as forſaken of his God, and ſinking into the abyſs of non-exiſtence; no—at this very moment, he is ſecure of *his* paternal protection, in whoſe *favour is life*, and whoſe *loving-kindneſs is better than life:* Secure of *this*, he muſt be ſafe in the moſt perilous and trying circumſtances, and happy through the whole of his exiſtence.

THE preſence of his Maker will ſcatter the gloom of death, and make the *evening light*, about him,—ſupport and comfort him, in his paſſage through the dark *valley:* Wherever he goes, and wherever he is, He will be his watchful guardian;—with his everlaſting arm will he protect, and ſave him,—and, finally, aſſign him a manſion, in the bleſt abodes, his Saviour is gone before to prepare.

WHATEVER diſquietudes may have ariſen in his mind, from his numerous and great imperfections, which gave him ſo frequent occaſion to humble himſelf before his Maker, the *righteous*, having once paſſed the line of time, will find himſelf

himſelf removed from all fear of condemnation,—will meet the ſmiles of his Judge, and, with extacy, hear him announce the ſentence deciſive of his everlaſting fate: *Well done good and faithful ſervant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord—inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:* There ſhall he *reſt* from his *labours*, and his *works* ſhall follow him, in the ample rewards of grace and glory.

THE ſolemn occaſion of our being in this houſe will naturally lead you to make the deſigned application of this diſcourſe. The deſign will be anſwered, if the ſentiments that have been ſuggeſted ſhould adminiſter conſolation to the *children* bereaved of a pious indulgent parent, whoſe long protracted life has been the fruitful ſource of happineſs to them; and at the period of which they cannot mourn without hope—to *the people*, whoſe faithful and beloved paſtor is removed by death—and to *thoſe*, who from intimate connexion have had an exalted and affectionate regard for him while living; and, at the ſame time, lead us all to a wiſe and uſeful improvement of the diſpenſation.

TIME has produced the event, and produced it, under the direction of Heaven, on the day,* upon which he often wiſhed it might take place. His indulgent Lord, when he was about to enter upon the ſervice of his ſanctuary here below, called him, we truſt, to the more ſublime enjoyments of his temple above! THIS

* He died ſuddenly in the morning of the Lord's day.

THIS SACRED DESK, in which he has ſtood *labouring in word and doctrine*, for almoſt *ſeventy years*,* ſhall know him no more.

So rich and laſting a bleſſing will be thought of by *this people*, with gratitude to *Him, who aſcended up on high, and gave gifts to men—for the perfecting of the ſaints. for the work of the miniſtry, for the edifying of the body of Chriſt.*—For his great moderation among them—for his ſingular benevo-

D lence—

* FROM September, 1717, he continued to preach in this place, before and after his ordination, to March 18, 1787.

THE Rev. Mr. PETER HOBART, who came from England with his church, was the firſt ſettled miniſter in Hingham.

AGREEABLE to the records of the town, Mr. HOBART lived in the miniſtry, in Hingham, 43 years.

NOVEMBER 27, 1678, the Rev. Mr. JOHN NORTON was ordained paſtor of the church in Hingham, about two months before Mr. HOBART's death; which happened Jan. 20, 1679.

MR. NORTON lived in the miniſtry almoſt 38 years: He died Oct. 3, 1716.

—VACANT one year and eight months, within a few days.

JUNE 11, 1718, the Rev. EBENEZER GAY, D. D. was ordained: He lived in the miniſtry 68 years, 9 months, and a few days: He died March 18, 1787.

FROM the above authentick account it appears, that the Rev. Mr. HOBART, with his church, ſettled in Hingham ſome time in the year 1635.

IT may deſerve remark, that the firſt pariſh in Hingham, for 152 years nearly, has had but three ordained miniſters, and been vacant, through the whole of that time, hardly one year and eight months.

lence—for his kind and ready attention to them in times of diſtreſs, and for his unremitted faithful ſervices, *they* muſt purſue him with an ardent affection, and wiſh to have his memory embalmed.

BUT no encomium of mine can elevate your ideas of his amiable and excellent character, both as a chriſtian, and as a miniſter of the goſpel. You, and your fathers, *are witneſſes how holily and juſtly and unblameably he behaved himſelf;* and with what diligence and fidelity he diſcharged the duties of the miniſterial office. Nor were his abilities, exerted in promoting the intereſt of the Redeemer's kingdom, unknown to others;—his light was ſo illuſtrious, that his praiſe is in all the churches. For learning—for liberality—candour, and ſtrength of mind, he was diſtinguiſhed and celebrated, by the judicious and candid. A particular and exact delineation of his character, however, is not pretended; to draw which would require a pen equal to his own—True greatneſs needs no laboured panegyrick!

BUT yet the penſive mind, habituated to eſteem and veneration, by a long uninterrupted courſe of friendſhip, will follow him beyond the grave, into the regions of immortality, and pleaſe itſelf in contemplating *him* as removed from all the imperfections incident to humanity, in this mortal ſtate,—from the labours of mental purſuits,—from all doubts in points of ſpeculation, *here* ſeen *through a glaſs darkly*,—from the debility and laſſitude, which

which time, by the conſtitution of heaven, produces in the human frame,—and as *now* engaged in the ſervice of his Maker, with unceaſing ardour, and rejoicing before him, in the vigour of perpetual youth.

WHILE we drop the friendly and ſympathetick tear over the remains of your DEAR and VENERABLE PASTOR, and contemplate his better part as having left this dark abode for the realms of eternal day; we muſt wiſh to *die the death of the righteous, and that our laſt end may be like his.*

BUT you are to remember that wiſhes alone will not ſecure the happy event. There is an inſeparable connexion between the deſired object and certain qualifications; we muſt live the life of the *righteous,* before, upon good grounds, we can hope to die his death.

YOUR PASTOR, *though dead, yet ſpeaketh.* The gracious words which have proceeded out of his mouth recollected by you, and carefully obſerved, will direct you how to ſecure the character of the righteous, and the bleſſings which attend it: As they have been inculcated upon you, from your childhood, it may be expected that they will make the deeper impreſſion, and be the more efficacious. It is not, however, intended to recommend to you, implicitly to receive *for doctrines the commandments of men:*—You are, in this view, to *call no man father on earth*—not even a DOCTOR GAY; but

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to *ſearch the ſcriptures* as the unerring ſtandard of truth, and the undeviating rule of practice: But yet, as he was *mighty in the ſcriptures*, and lived the goſpel, which he preached to others, you have the higher motive to recollect, and with the more ſafety may depend upon, his inſtructions; which, if they are admitted to have their practical influence, will, no doubt, *make you wiſe unto ſalvation. Remember, therefore, how you have received and heard, and hold faſt and repent.* For your aſſiſtance in future—we ardently wiſh that you may have another paſtor, who ſhall alſo feed you with knowledge and underſtanding, and be as judicious and faithful a guide to you, in the way to heaven.

THE *aged* of this congregation ſhould reflect, that *the hoary head is a crown of glory*, only, *if it be found in the way of righteouſneſs. Precept upon precept, and line upon line*, ſhould make them wiſer; and *precept*, enforced by example, ſhould make them better. The death of your aged inſtructor and friend ſhould remind you, that the *time of your departure is at hand*; and ſhould be improved as a motive to quicken your courſe in running the *way* of God's commandments, and to *bring forth fruit in old age*;—that you may be ſatisfied with life, when the *decree* ſhall *bring forth*, and your feet ſtumble upon the dark mountains; and, if the call out of life ſhould be ſudden, *may*, with the *righteous*, have hope in your death.

THE preſent diſpenſation of Providence demands the

the ſerious attention of all—it ſhows us the frailty of human nature, and leads us to reflect upon the importance of due preparation for death. We ſee that the longeſt life will have a period; and that we alſo ſhall one day be lodged in the grave, *the houſe appointed for all the living*: It muſt, therefore, be wiſe in all to prepare for the certain event.

THE death of this aged ſervant of the Lord will naturally remind thoſe of the ſame *order*, that they alſo will not be *ſuffered to continue by reaſon of death*, and inſpire them with reſolution to emulate his virtues, and to *be followers of him, even as he was of Chriſt*; that at what hour ſoever they may be called to give up their account, they alſo may be *ready*; and death, diſrobed of all its terrours, may be to them a happy paſſport into the joy of their Lord.

AND as *this is the end of all men, the living ſhould lay it to his heart*; every particular perſon ſhould attend to the admonition, which this inſtance of mortality brings home to him. We are *here* all, of every rank and condition, probationers for a future ſtate of exiſtence. Death will ſoon cloſe the preſent ſcene, and introduce us into the preſence of our Judge:—When, according to our different moral character, *righteous* or *wicked*, we ſhall be admitted into *his kingdom*, or be *caſt into outer darkneſs*. To that high advancement beyond the grave the righteous is entitled, by the unfailing promiſe of his Maker: This character, therefore,

therefore, alone, can ſecure us a peaceful and happy death: To obtain *it*, then, as the *one thing needful*, our intereſt urges us to endeavour, by every poſſible method.—It is the *work* for which we were ſent into the world: To accompliſh it, *while it is day*, will reconcile to the grave, and lay a foundation for happineſs on the ſtage of immortality.

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From the MASSACHUSETTS GAZETTE, of March 30, 1787.

THE Reverend EBENEZER GAY, D.D. Paſtor of the Firſt Church in Hingham, departed this life, March 18, 1787, in the 91ſt year of his age, and 69th of his miniſtry. To give a good man his deſerved character, is not only juſtice to the dead, but charity to the living; for while they *mark the perfect man, and behold the upright*, impreſſed with the amiableneſs of his virtues, they may be induced to imitate them, *and their end be peace.* This purpoſe, it is hoped, may be anſwered by a faint portrait of the Doctor's.

HE had his education at Harvard College, where he made diſtinguiſhed proficiency in the knowledge of the Claſſicks, and various other ſciences, and received his firſt degree in 1714. His inclination early led him to the ſtudy of Divinity; and ſoon after he had received his ſecond degree, he began to preach; and was ordained to the work of the miniſtry, in Hingham, June 11, 1718. The duties of his office engroſſed his whole attention; and, making the Bible the rule of his faith, he ſtudied that ſacred book with great diligence, and ſoon became mighty in the Scriptures: In conſequence of which, he was led to a juſter view of the plan of Divine Grace in the Goſpel, and to ſentiments more liberal and candid, than were common in that day. His compoſitions were judicious—evidently the reſult of intenſe thought and application—calculated to give his hearers a knowledge of the method of reconciliation through the Mediator, and impreſs upon their minds a ſenſe of moral obligation. The doctrines which he preached to others were enforced by his own example: His people are witneſſes, how holily, how juſtly, and unblameably, he behaved himſelf among them: To them he readily afforded aſſiſtance in times of diſtreſs; and upon all occaſions diſcovered, that their temporal as well as eternal intereſt lay near his heart. His heart and his doors were always open to his friends; and, by his hoſpitality, he ſecured the affectionate regard of all who viſited his houſe.

BY his inoffenſive and condeſcending conduct, he manifeſted the pacifick diſpoſition of his heart, and rendered his unwearied exertions to promote peace and good order, the more effectual. In Eccleſiaſtical Councils, (to which he was formerly often invited) his wiſdom and benevolence were conſpicuous, and gave him great advantage in compoſing differences, and healing diviſions, ſubſiſting in churches.

THOUGH his converſation abroad might ſeem too reſerved—yet, in private, among his friends, it was free, inſtructive and edifying; —the ſalutary effects of which have been ſenſibly felt by his brethren

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in the miniſtry; and his kind, parental treatment will ever be acknowledged by them. His prayers were rational and devout, and well adapted to the various occaſions of life. Enthuſiaſm and ſuperſtition formed no part of his religious character. In his Chriſtian warfare, he did not entangle himſelf with the affairs of this life; but his converſation was in heaven. In times of ſickneſs, and in the near views of diſſolution, he appeared to have compoſure and reſignation of mind, and hopes full of immortality.

His prudent and obliging conduct rendered him amiable and beloved, as a neighbour. His tender feelings for the diſtreſſed induced him to afford relief to the poor, according to his ability. His beneficent actions indicated the practical ſenſe he had of his Lord's own words—"It is more bleſſed to give, than to receive." The ſerenity of his mind, and evenneſs of his temper, under the infirmities of advanced years, made him agreeable to his friends, and continued to the laſt the happineſs which had ſo long ſubſiſted in his family; in which he always preſided with great tenderneſs and dignity. A reflection on the indulgence of Heaven in the long enjoyment of ſo affectionate and worthy a parent, and the hopeful proſpect of his happineſs beyond the grave, muſt inſpire them with gratitude, and lead them into a cordial acquieſcence in the painful ſeparation.

The uncommon vigour of his mental powers, at that time of life, is evident from a printed ſermon which he preached on the day when he completed the 85th year of his age. The Univerſity at Cambridge voluntarily conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity, in 1785, as an expreſſion of their ſenſe of his great merit.

It was his greateſt dread, he often ſaid to his friends, to live beyond his uſefulneſs: And it is remarkable, that, by the continuance of his bodily and mental abilities, he was able to perſevere in the ways of well-doing—to maintain the poſt aſſigned him, and go through all the duties of his office, to the very cloſe of life.

His death was ſudden——On Lord's-day morning he roſe well as uſual; while preparing for the pulpit, he was arreſted by the harbinger of death, and, within an hour after, calmly reſigned his uſeful life; and, like David of old, after he had ſerved his generation, by the will of God, fell on ſleep.

Through the long courſe of his miniſtry, he was greatly reſpected by his people; which is evident, not only by their attention to him while living, but by their kind offices at his interment.

Thus lived and died that great and good man, the Reverend Doctor Gay, who now reſts from his labours, and his works, we truſt, follow him, in the ample rewards of grace and glory.

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